THE JAP JI

English Version & Commentary

COMMENTARY

Guru Nanak, by means of a prologue, attempts a definition of the nature of the Almighty, indefinable as He is; referring to His timelessness, His primacy, His being the Uncaused First Cause of everything; and goes on to hint about the means by which He may be reached. The theme is explored in greater detail as we proceed further, and the entire piece is neatly concluded with a stanza which matches the opening one in its concentration, its condensation and its literary excellence. The prologue is concerned with the nature of God and hints at the means to Salvation. The epilogue sums up beautifully the nature of God's creation and concludes with a song of triumph for those who attain Salvation.

PROLOGUE

There is One Reality, the Unmanifest-Manifested;
Ever-Existent, He is Naam (Conscious Spirit),
The Creator; pervading all;
Without fear; without enmity;
The Timeless; the Unborn and the Self-existent;
Complete within Itself.
Through the favour of His true Servant, the Guru,
He may be realised.
He was when there was nothing;
He was before all ages began;
He existeth now, O Nanak,
And shall exist forevermore.

The text as given constitutes the Mul-Mantra or the basic principles as taught by Guru Nanak. God is described as the One Supreme Being (Nirankar), the Unmanifest-Manifested (Ekankar), the Eternal Verity, the Conscious Spirit pervading

all forms that emanate from Him—He upholding the whole creation. He is not apart from His creation, but is immanent in every form.

"This universe is the Abode of the True One
And the True One resides in it."

He being the Creator of all, has no equal and has therefore, none to fear or envy. Again, He is above causation, has a sure existence, but not subject to births and deaths.

He, the Timeless One, existing before time, in time and beyond time, is the only object of worship, and can be reached only through the favour of His Holy Word in Man.

* * *

Nanak sums up the different systems of human thought preached for the realisation of oneness with God. He states their inadequacy to reveal the great Reality. Philosophy, intellectual power, outward observances, like the purification of the body (which cannot purify the sinfulness of the mind), keeping silence and fasting etc., are but futile endeavours to reach the Goal. There is only one way to reach Him, and that, says Nanak, is to make God's Will our own. His Will is already a part of our being, but we are not conscious of it. It is not a question of finding or creating something new, but rather of attuning oneself to what is already there.

STANZA I

One cannot comprehend Him through reason, even if one reasoned for ages;
One cannot achieve inner peace by outward silence, not though one sat dumb for ages;
One cannot buy contentment with all the riches of the world, nor reach Him with all mental ingenuity.
How may one know the Truth and break through the cloud of falsehood?
There is a Way, O Nanak, to make His Will our own,
His Will which is already wrought in our existence.

"Hukam" or Will, itself, is something which no words can describe. It baffles all description. The real understanding of the Divine Will comes only by direct revelation to every soul. But, with a view to bring home some idea of It, the Master indicates the multifarious aspects directed by His Will. He then goes on to indicate the touchstone by which one may know those who have become one with His Will. The knowledge of the Divine Will means the destruction of the ego.

STANZA II

All things are manifestations of His Will;
But His Will is beyond description.
By His Will is matter quickened into life;
By His Will is greatness obtained;
By His Will some are born high and others low.
By His Will are men's joys and sorrows ordained;[1]
By His Will (the pious) obtain Salvation;
By His Will (the impious) wander in endless transmigration.
All exist under His Will,
And nothing stands outside.
One attuned with His Will, O Nanak, is wholly freed from ego.

* * *

Nanak, as a great Teacher, anticipates the confusion that might arise in the minds of some seekers by the study of various scriptures. These do not always say the same thing about God's Will, but there is no need for doubt and scepticism; for what they really describe is not God's Will (which in itself is indescribable), but its various workings and manifestations. God's Will pervades and directs His Creation, but it is something more, something that is itself and above and beyond creation.

1. The reference here is to the Law of Karma or the Law of Cause and Effect. Our joys and sorrows are all ordained—being the result of our past actions. "As one sows, so does one reap," is a common aphorism. Elsewhere, Nanak, has beautifully said:

"The flowing pen of His Will,
Runs according to our deeds."

STANZA III

Some sing of His greatness, but only according to the power bestowed upon them;
Some sing of His bounties, taking them as His signs;
Some sing of Him as incomprehensible;
Some sing of Him, as transmitting dust into life, and life into dust again: Creator and Destroyer, the Giver of life and its Withdrawer.
Some sing of Him as at once the nearest, and the most remote.
There is no end to His description.
Countless have tried to describe Him, but He still stands beyond all description.
His recipients may tire, but His bounty is untiring;
Ages upon ages, Man has fed upon it.
His Will directs the world;
And yet, O Nanak, He dwells beyond concern or care.

* * *

God's Will is indescribable and the question arises—how may we become one with it? Guru Nanak replies that the best we can do is to sit in meditation at the early hour of dawn and commune with His Holy Word. Our actions and our efforts count no doubt—it is through them that we achieve human birth—but, says Nanak, we cannot earn Salvation, for it must come as the gift of His Grace. Guru Nanak, in the Jap Ji, turns time and again to this paradox, that Salvation is only possible through His Grace, yet we need effort to achieve this Salvation.

STANZA IV

True is the Lord, True His Holy Word;
His love has been described as infinite.
Men pray to Him for gifts, which He grants untiringly.
When all is His;

What can we offer at His feet?
What can we say to win His love?
At the ambrosial hour of the early dawn,
Be you in communion with the Divine Word
And meditate on His Glory.
Our birth is the fruit of our actions;
But Salvation comes only from His Grace.
O Nanak, know the True One as immanent in all.

* * *

Communion with the Holy Naam—the Divine Word—together with meditation on His Glory, is the "open sesame" to the realisation of the One Being. Word is the substance and the power by which all life is made. Holy communion with its rapturous strains, is a gift that can be attained only through a Living Master. In His company a life of holy inspiration and love of God is followed and the inner eye is opened to see the presence of God in all things. Nanak had hinted of this in the prologue itself and now proceeds to describe the greatness and importance of such a soul. A True Master is not a mere human being, but has become One with God, and as such contains in Himself the powers of all the gods and goddesses. He is veritably the Word made flesh and blood. The one lesson that such a Master teaches His disciples is to meditate always upon the Lord, the Creator of everything, and never to forget Him.

STANZA V

He can neither be established nor created;
The Formless One is limitless, complete in Himself.
Those who worship Him are honoured;
Nanak, ever sing of the Treasure-house of all virtues.
Let us sing of Him and hold communion with the Word, with hearts full of loving devotion;
For then shall all sorrows end and we be led joyously Homeward.

The Master[1] is the Song Eternal or Word personified;
He is the Vedas, the scriptures;[2]
He is saturated with the Divine.
He is Siva[3], He is Vishnu,[3] and He is Brahma;[3]
And their consorts Parvati,[4] Lakshmi[4] and Saraswati[4] also.
The greatness of the Master, even if known, cannot be described with mortal eloquence.
My Master has taught me one thing;
He is the Lord of everything, Him I may never forget.

* * *

In this stanza, Nanak develops more fully the paradox just touched upon in stanza IV. One cannot attain union with God through the observance of certain outward actions, viz: reading of scriptures, saying of prayers, going on pilgrimages, observance of silence, fasts and vigils, performance of rites and rituals, all of which but form part of Apra Vidya which prepare the ground for creating interest for higher life and developing devotion. You may make the best use of them. But these outer acts cannot give emancipation. They are by themselves meaningless. What matters is His glance of Grace. If one has received this, one is blessed indeed. And yet, if Salvation depends on God's love alone, let us not live in idleness. A life of inertia can lead nowhere and God helps those who help themselves. No doubt Salvation is achieved only

1. The word used in the original is *Gurmukh*, which at once means the mouthpiece of God and the Master who leads His disciples on the Path of God.

2. The Master possesses the knowledge of the Divine on which all scriptures are based.

3. The Master displays all the attributes of the gods forming the Hindu trinity: Brahma, Vishnu and Siva, symbolic of the principles of creation, preservation and destruction. Like Brahma, the expounder of the Vedas, He imparts Divine knowledge and thereby gives a new birth to His disciples—the birth in spirit. Like Vishnu He protects and preserves them from all harm and like Siva, He destroys all evil propensities in them.

4. Similarly the goddesses: Parvati, Lakshmi, and Saraswati are symbolic of devotion, wealth and learning. He is a prototype of all these virtues.

through Grace, yet one must make oneself worthy of the same. And the only way to make oneself worthy is by following the Path taught by a true Master. By becoming conscious of the Divine Plan, we make His Will our own.

STANZA VI

If I may only please Him, 'tis pilgrimage enough;
If not, nothing—no rites or toils—avails;
Whichever way I look, I find that in His creation,
None has won salvation without His Grace—regardless of Karmas.[1]

You can discover untold Spiritual riches within yourself;
If you but abide by the teachings of your Master.[2]
My Master has taught me one lesson:
He is the Lord of everything, may I never forget Him.

* * *

Through certain yogic practices one can prolong one's life and master super human and miraculous powers. But, says Nanak, these do not necessarily win God's goodwill, without which all is vanity. In fact, in a later stanza XXIX, Nanak unequivocally states that such supernatural powers, more often than not, become hindrances in the way of full realisation of God.

1. *Karma*: Action. This term in Indian thought refers to a very complex Hindu doctrine. It emphasises belief that our present actions determine our future, not only in this life but in the life to come. There is nothing like chance. Man works according to a chain of cause and effect. Though spiritual salvation is not possible without Grace, yet, says Nanak, we must deserve that Grace by our Karmas or actions in this life or the lives preceding.

2. *Guru*: This term makes its appearance frequently in *the Jap Ji* and indeed is freely used in all the Sikh scriptures. It stands for a spiritual teacher and whenever Nanak uses it, He does not mean any person who sets up as a spiritual guide, but one who has reached the highest plane in the spiritual journey, who is no longer separate from the Almighty and has become His mouthpiece.

STANZA VII

If one could extend one's life to four ages,[1] nay make it ten times longer;
If one were known throughout the nine planes of creation;
And everyone therein followed him in respect;
If every creature praised him to the sky:
All this and more has no value if God's eye looked not kindly upon him:
Without His goodwill, he will be reckoned as the meanest worm amongst worms;
And sinners shall charge him with sins.
O Nanak, He bestows virtues on those who have none, and adds to the store of the virtuous.
But there is naught that can bestow aught upon Him.

* * *

Nanak, after a brief digression (Stanza VII), resumes the theme of the secrets of Spirituality. Having already told us that at-one-ment with God is made possible by making His Will as our own, this, in turn, by communion with the Word, whose secret is revealed by a Living Master, He now explains the fruit of such communion. One rises above physical consciousness and comes into Cosmic Awareness. One achieves the status of a True Saint and the mystery of creation stands revealed.

Kabir also makes the same statement:

"When you transcend into the beyond, a subtle voice is heard. This voice only a 'Brahm Giani' can hear."

This inner voice, heard in moments of concentrated meditation, is not to be confused, as has often been done, with the

1. Nanak here is referring to the ancient Indian doctrine of the four Yugas or cycles of time, which somewhat parallels the Western belief in the Golden Age, the Silver Age, the Bronze Age and the Iron Age. Nanak makes frequent use of such concepts and doctrines from ancient Hindu lore; but He refers to them not in a spirit of scientific truth, but often as a Divine poet, who employs allusion and mythology to drive home His point.

voice of conscience. Our conscience is nothing more than the sum of our past actions, passing judgment upon our present ones. As such it varies from person to person. But the Inner Voice of true meditation is something universal, something that does not change, but is the same for all.

The next three stanzas (IX, X and XI), carry on the theme of the fruit of communion with the Word, which makes possible all kinds of attainment, material, intellectual and spiritual, leading ultimately to the Godhead.

STANZA VIII

By communion with the Word one can attain the status of a Siddha,[1] a Pir,[2] a Sura,[3] or a Nath;[4]
By communion with the Word, one can understand the mysteries of the earth, the supporting bull[5] and the heavens;
By communion with the Word, the earthly regions, the heavenly plateaux and the nether worlds stand revealed;
By communion with the Word, we can escape unscathed through the portals of Death;
O Nanak, His devotees live in perpetual ecstasy, for the Word washes away all sin and sorrow.

STANZA IX

By communion with the Word, one can attain the powers of *Shiva*, *Brahma* and *Indra*;
By communion with the Word, one can win esteem from all irrespective of one's past;
By communion with the Word, one can have yogic insight with the mysteries of life and self all revealed;

1. *Siddha* : A man endowed with super natural powers.
2. *Pir*: A Muslim divine or a spiritual teacher.
3. *Sura*: Gods.
4. *Nath*: Yogin—an adept in yoga.
5. *Dhaul*: It is the fabled bull, supposed to be supporting the earths and heavens, cf. footnote under VII ibid.

By communion with the Word, one can acquire the true import of the *Sastras*,[1] *Smritis*[2] and *Vedas*;[3]
O Nanak, His devotees live in perpetual ecstasy, for the Word washes away all sin and sorrow.

1. *Sastras*: The philosophical treatises of the Hindus.
2. *Smritis*: The ancient scriptures of the Hindus.
3. *Vedas*: The earliest books of human thought.

STANZA X

By communion with the Word, one becomes the abode of Truth, contentment and true knowledge;
By communion with the Word, one gets the fruit of ablution at sixty-eight pilgrimages;[1]
By communion with the Word, one wins the honour of the learned;
By communion with the Word, one attains the state of *Sahaj*;[2]
O Nanak, His devotees live in perpetual ecstasy, for the Word washes away all sin and sorrow.

1. *Ath-Sath*: Literally these two words mean *Eight* and *Sixty*, i.e. sixty-eight. Nanak is once again making use of the Hindu belief that ablutions at sixty-eight places of pilgrimage bring purity from all sinful acts. See footnote under VII ibid.

2. *Sahaj*: This term refers to the state, when the turmoil of the physical, astral and causal worlds with all their enchanted panorama, are transcended and the Great Principle of life is seen within.

STANZA XI

By communion with the Word, one becomes the abode of all virtues;
By communion with the Word, one becomes a *Sheikh, a Pir* and a true spiritual king;
By communion with the Word, the spiritually blind find their way to Realisation:
By communion with the Word, one crosses beyond the Limitless Ocean of illusionary Matter;
O Nanak, His devotees live in perpetual ecstasy, for the Word washes away all sin and sorrow.

Nanak, having tried to describe the fruit of communion with the Word, in the preceding four stanzas, now goes on to tell about the state of one who has attuned his will with the Divine Will which cannot be described, as His Will is beyond description. The idea of the controlling power in this world may be said to be the Divine Will. God Himself is Formless, but He assumed Form, He became the Word or Naam. It was from this Word that the various planes of creation sprang into existence, one below the other. He who practises the Word, i.e. withdraws his soul from the body and lets it be drawn up by the power of the Divine Music of the Word, can progress from one spiritual plane to another, until he reaches the very Source and becomes one with It. As he proceeds on the journey, his mental and spiritual horizons widen. His soul is cleansed of its past sins and freed from the binding chains of "Karma". It thus transcends suffering and escapes from the wheel of transmigration. Once one has attained true salvation, one can help others on the Path as well. Great indeed is the Power of the Word, but unfortunately there are very few who know it. All this occupies stanzas XII to XV.

STANZA XII

None can describe the condition of one who has made God's Will his own;
Whoever tries to do so, must realise his folly.
No supply of paper, pen or scribe can ever describe the state of such a one.
O, great is the Power of the Word;
But few there be that know it.

STANZA XIII

By practice of the Word, one rises into universal consciousness and develops right understanding;
By practice of the Word, one develops clairvoyance and transvision of the whole creation;

By practice of the Word, one is freed from sorrow and suffering;
By practice of the Word, one shall not go to *Yama*[1] after his death
O, great is the Power of the Word,
But few there be that know it.

STANZA XIV

By practice of the Word, one speeds on to the Higher Spiritual Planes unhindered;
By practice of the Word, one gets into the spiritual plane openly and honourably;
By practice of the Word, one escapes the by-paths of *Yama*, the king of Death;
By practice of the Word, one gets in close touch with the Truth.
O, great is the Power of the Word,
But few there be that know it.

STANZA XV

By practice of the Word, one finally attains salvation;
By practice of the Word, one leads one's kith and kin as well to freedom;
By practice of the word, one saves not only himself but when he becomes an Adept, many others whom he guides;
By practice of the Word, one freed from desires, escapes from the wheel of transmigration.
O, great is the Power of the Word,
But few there be that know it.

1. *Yama*: It is known to the men who know of the world Beyond, that at the time of shaking off the mortal coil, souls are ushered into the other world by certain messengers who are the angels of Death (Yamduts). Sinners are badly treated by them, while the others are invariably led before *Yama*, the king of Death. But one who practises the Word escapes *Yama* altogether; for he is received at the *Astral World* by the Radiant Form of the Master and is escorted by Him to the spiritual planes.

Holy communion with the Word or Naam, says Nanak, is the only means to achieve oneness with the Supreme Lord. No other means can procure for man this end. It is the Spirit Current, emanating from One Being, as It does, that forms all the spiritual and material planes, reverberating in and out of all of them. It comes down from the purest spiritual planes to Materio-Spiritual and thence to Material planes, changing in Sound as it passes through the different planes. The main sub-divisions of the spiritual and astral planes are five in number as given by various scriptures. It takes on five different Sounds as it passes through them. These five Sounds are termed by the Masters or those who are Adept in this Science, "panch Shabd" (or five Words): "Panch" also literally means "head" and Nanak, in this passage, refers to both these meanings. The Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us. All the Saints are conscious of the one and the same Word, which may be defined as the Five-Sounded Word. Naam, Bani (or Word) and Hukam (or Will) are used by Nanak almost synonymously. Those who are all along conscious of the Divine Word or God-head, become His mouthpiece and are called Sant. Such Ones are honoured in His Court and are His chief workers. It is the communion with this "Five-Sounded Word," which unites one with the Lord. All other means fail.

It is from this Word that the whole creation springs up and returns to It on its dissolution. It is resounding within all of us and man's body is verily God's living temple. The saints of all denominations speak of the same, as the only means by which to reach the ultimate Reality.

The Mohammedans call It "Bang-i-Asmani" or the Voice coming from the Heaven. Shamas Tabrez and Khawaja Hafiz Shirazi speak of the same as has already been quoted in the introduction. The Hindus express the same by the words "Nad" (Music of the Spheres), "Akash Bani" (the Voice coming from the heavens) and "Udgit" (Music of the Beyond).

St. John, in the Bible, defined it thus:

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

All things were made by Him, and without Him was nothing made that was made."

STANZA XVI

The Saint (or the Word personified), is acceptable at His Court and is the Chief Elect therein;
The Saint adorns the threshold of God and is honoured even by kings;
The Saint lives by and meditates on the One Word.
Whoever discusses and expounds the mystery of His creation, realises that the works of the Creator are beyond reckoning.
Dharm or Word born of His Grace is the proverbial bull that is harmoniously sustaining the creation,
Whosoever realises this verily knows the Truth.
It is nothing but the Word, that is carrying the crushing load of the entire creation;
For were this earth upheld by a bull, that in turn must be supported by some other planet and that by another, and so on ad infinitum :
What a tremendous load !
What other power could support it?
None, but the Word.
There is no end to the creation;
There are countless forms of life with varied names, species and colours;
Writ on the objective world by the Everflowing Pen of the Creator.
Who can reckon His creation, and if one could, how great would be the count?
How great is His Power and how beautiful His handiwork?
Who can count the measure of His sweet bounty?
With one Word[1] of His, this vast creation blossomed into being;
And a thousand streams (of life) sprang into existence;
What power have I to conceive of Thy wonderful nature?

Too poor am I to make an offering of my life to Thee;
Whatever pleaseth thee, is good.
Thou art forevermore;
O Formless One !

* * *

Guru Nanak, in this stanza, gives the picture of those engaged in good deeds, those who seek to reach Him in diverse ways. These set ways, though praiseworthy, are not to be compared to the God-vision made possible by communion with and practice of the Holy Word, by which means alone, one can make God's Will his own.

STANZA XVII

Countless there are that remember Thee, and countless those that love Thee;
Countless there are that worship Thee, and countless those that seek Thee in austerity and penance;
Countless there are that recite from sacred books Thy praises; and
Countless those that, absorbed in Yoga, stand indifferent to the world;
Countless those Thy devotees who contemplate Thy attributes and wisdom; and
Countless those that practice truth and charity;
Countless are the heroes that boldly face the foeman's steel; and
Countless those who have vowed silence, meditate on Thee with unceasing love.
What power have I to conceive of Thy wonderful nature?
Too poor, am I, to make an offering of my life to Thee.

1. The Hindus believe that the Word was "Eko-Aham Bahu-Syam" meaning thereby "I am one and wish to become many". The Mohammedans say that the word was "Kun-fi-Kun" as "He willed, and lo, all the universe sprang up".

Whatever pleaseth Thee is good:
Thou art forevermore;
O, Formless One.

* * *

Having spoken of the pious, Nanak now lists the impious.

STANZA XVIII

Innumerable are the fools, stark blind in ignorance; and
Innumerable the thieves and crooks that thrive on ill-gotten gains;
Innumerable those that exercise tyranny and oppression; and
Innumerable the cut-throats living by heinous crimes;
Innumerable those that revel in shameless sins; and
Innumerable the liars that practise fraud and falsehood;
Innumerable the impious that live on unwholesome[1] foods; and
Innumerable the slanderers who add to their burden by calumniating others.
Innumerable, the many for lowly Nanak to describe.
What power have I to conceive of Thy wonderful nature?
Too poor, am I, to make an offering of my life to Thee.
Whatever pleaseth Thee is good;
Thou art forevermore;
O Formless One !

* * *

Manifold is His beauty, and vast is His creation. It baffles all description. Words cannot picture it adequately. Yet if words are inadequate, they are the only means at our disposal. God Himself is Nameless, and the various names by which He is described were employed by the Master-souls: and though these can never do full justice to the subject which is indescribable, yet they give us some vague idea and stimulate us towards the Path.

1. The words used in the original are *Mal* and *Bhakh*, which mean eating unwholesome food and refer to non-vegetarian diet and intoxicants. Even vegetarian diet and otherwise harmless drinks, if procured by unfair means, are also classed as unwholesome and as such their use proves a positive hindrance on the Path.

STANZA XIX

Countless Thy names and countless Thy places;
Unapproachable and inaccessible Thy innumerable heavenly plateaux;
Even by the word *countless*,[1] we fail to describe Thee;
By words we describe Thee and by words we praise Thee.
By words, we acquire Divine knowledge, and in words are sung Thy hymns and attributes;
It is words we employ in speech and in writing;
In them is our fate ordained;
But He who ordains is above such writ.
As Thou ordaineth, so do we receive.
Thou art immanent in all;
And nothing is where Thy Word is not.
What power have I to conceive of Thy wonderful nature?
Too poor, am I, to make an offering of my life to Thee.
Whatever pleaseth Thee is good;
Thou art forevermore;
O Formless One!

* * *

Our souls have been wandering under the control of the mind and the outgoing faculties and have been defiled by impressions of the outside world, so much so, that we have become identified with the body and forgotten our own self and God. How to purify the mind from the dirt of sins and free the soul from the bondage of matter, forms the subject matter of this stanza. To make His Will one's own, by communion with the Word, is the only means to this end.

Actions, good or bad, fail to procure communion within, as they keep one attached to the outward observances, which bind the soul to matter. Lord Krishna says:

"*Good or bad actions are fetters, which equally bind the*

1. The words *count* and countless are of little consequence for the Almighty. He who is immanent in everything and is the very life of the creation itself, knows every particle thereof.

soul to the world, irrespective of whether they are of gold or of iron".

The horizon of mind is darkened with the mists of sin gathered in previous births. Until these are cleared away, the Sun of Divinity cannot shine forth in full glory. Holy Naam—the Divine Word—and naught else, clears the mists away and restores the mind to its original transparency. There is no holier sanctuary than that of the purified mind.

STANZA XX

When the hands, feet and the body are besmeared they are washed clean with water;
When the clothes get dirty and polluted, they are cleansed by soap;
When one's mind gets defiled by sin, it can be purified only by communion with the Word.
Men do not become saints or sinners merely by words.
But they carry deeds with them wherever they go.
As one sows, so does one reap;
O Nanak, men come and go by the wheel[1] of birth and death as ordained by His Will.

* * *

Good actions, like acts of mercy and charity, although commendable in themselves, do not have an important bearing on the highest spiritual attainment. They cease to be of consequence, once the soul begins its inner journey from the "Til" or the third eye: If therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of Light." Matt 6:22. Borne along the Current of the Word, the soul reaches "Amrit-saar" or "Amritsar" or the Fount of Nectar, the Amritsar in man. There any impurities, that may be still clinging to the soul, are finally washed away. Thus the soul is made fit for the onward

1. The inexorable Law of Karma or the Law of Cause and Effect also works under His Will.

journey to the highest spiritual plane of "Sat Naam" which is of ineffable greatness and glory.

STANZA XXI

Pilgrimages, austerities, mercy, charity and alms-giving, cease to be of any consequence, when one gets an ingress into the *Til*—the Inner Eye ;[1]

Communion with and practice of the Holy Word, with heart full of devotion, procures admittance into the Inner Spiritual Realms, washing away the dirt of sins at the Sacred Fount[2] within.

All virtues are Thine, O Lord; I possess not one,

There can be no worship without practicing the Holy Word.

From Thee has emanated the *Bani* or the Holy Word, which is the path to salvation;

Thou art Truth,[3] enchantingly sweet, and my mind yearns for Thee.

1l. *Til* : It literally means the mustard seed. Here it is used for the ganglion between and behind the two eyes. Hindus call it *Shiv Netra* or the *Third Eye*. In the Gospel it is termed as *Single Eye*. The Sufis call it *Nukta-i-Saveda*. It is the seat of soul in man. It is the first stage where the soul collects itself and is enabled to rise in the higher spiritual planes.

Guru Ram Das, in this context, says:

"Mind wanders away every second as it has not entered the Til."

Bhai Gurdas has given a beautiful description of it in his Kabits and Swaiyas Nos. 140, 141, 213, 265, 269, 270 and 294. Kabir has also referred to Till, in his Dohas or couplets.

Tulsi Sahib, tells us that mystery of God is revealed only when one penetrates behind the Til.

2. The sacred Fount of Nectar is the *Amrit-saar* or *Amritsar* in man. It is not to be confused with Amritsar, the sacred pool founded by Guru Ram Das (4th Guru) and completed in the time of Guru Arjan (5th Guru). The Sacred Fount, here referred to, by Nanak, is situated in the third spiritual plane, called the *Dasam Duwar*. The Mohammedans call it *Hauz-i-Kausar* and the Hindus term it as *Prag Raj*. It is here that the pilgrim soul gets its real baptism and is washed clean of all impurities and regains its pristine purity.

3. Truth or *Sat Naam* resides in *Sach Khand*, which is the highest of the five spiritual planes, where the Formless One dwells. This is explained in the stanzas assigned for the various planes at the end of the text.

What the occasion, what the epoch, what the week, what the day;
What the season, what the hour, when Thou first came into being or expression?
The "pandits" could not discover it, else they would have recorded it in the Puranas:[1]
Nor could the *qazis*[2] determine it, else it would have been in the Quran;
Nor could the "yogis" or any one else divine it.
The Creator alone knoweth the hour, when He came into manifestation.
How shall I address Thee or praise Thee, O Lord?
How shall I describe Thee or know Thee?
O Nanak, one and all speak of Thee, each wiser than the rest,
Great art Thou, and greater still, is Thy Holy Word,
What It Wills, cometh to pass.
Thy greatness Thou alone knoweth.
And those, O Nanak, that claim to know the most, shall have no honour in the life beyond.

* * *

God's creation is manifold, and beyond human comprehension. The finite cannot conceive the Infinite. All attempts to know Him and His Creation fail. However, one thing, says Nanak, is certain and that is that everything emanates from the One Source.

STANZA XXII

There are millions of nether regions and skies above skies;
Man has wandered endlessly in His search:
The Vedas also say the same.
The Muslim books speak of eighteen thousand universes, but it is the same Power that sustains them all:

1. *Pandits* or the learned men conversant with Hindu scriptures, like Vedas and Puranas—the ancient treatises.
2. *Qazis* or the Muslims learned in religious law and theology.

If It could be accounted for, an account of it would have been recorded.
All attempts at description are in vain;
O Nanak, admit His greatness.;
He alone knows Himself.

* * *

Even if one, through communion with the Word, merges into the Infinite, one still cannot fathom its depths, for the illimitable has no limits. It is enough that the stream loses itself in the ocean. Blessed are they whose hearts are filled with the Divine Love, and no earthly possessions compare with them.

STANZA XXIII

His devotees praise Him, yet never attain full knowledge of the Infinite;
Like streams tumbling into the ocean, they know not the depths therein.
Even kings and emperors with heaps of wealth and vast dominion,
Compare not with an ant filled with the love of God.

* * *

God's creation is limitless. Many have tried to fathom its mystery, yet none can know Him, until they reach His height. The soul beholds God when it enters into "Sach Khand," the highest of the spiritual planes. How can it be otherwise? How can one behold what is pure spirit with these material eyes? One must transcend on the wings of the Word and one can only do so, through His Grace.

STANZA XXIV

Endless are His praises, endless the words of commendation;
Endless His works and endless His gifts;

Endless His vision, and endless His inspiration;
Endless and beyond understanding is His purpose,
Endless His creation and endless the ends thereof.
Endless men's search in anguish for His limits, but His limits cannot be found.
Endless He is, and none can know His end;
The more we say, the more He is.
Exalted is the Lord, and exalted His abode;
More exalted still His Holy Word.
He who reaches His height,
He alone may glimpse Him.
O Nanak, He alone knows His greatness;
And it is only His glance of Grace, can lift us to His height.

* * *

His bounty is supreme. Magnanimous, as He is, He showers His gifts on all alike whether good or bad. All have their share, none is ignored. He knows us all, better than we do, and bestows on us what is the best for us. But the greatest of His bounties is the gift of the Eternal Song. When He confers it on man, out of His Grace, it makes him the king of kings.

STANZA XXV

His benevolence is manifold, and none can record it;
He is the giver of all, coveting nothing in return;
Many are the warriors, who are beggars at His door,
And many more, whose number is beyond reckoning;
Many are those who, misusing His gifts, wallow in sensuality;
Many who receiving His gifts, deny Him;
Many the fools who only eat and enjoy, but think not of the Donor.
And many lie afflicted by hunger, misery and pain, which too are Thy gifts, O Lord.
Bondage and salvation both go by Thy Will;
None else has any say therein.

If some dare claim otherwise, he shall soon have cause to repent of his temerity.
He knows all and bestows accordingly.
But few there be that realise this.
O Nanak, on whom He bestows His Gift of the Song Celestial, is the king of kings.

* * *

Nanak, in this passage, refers to the uniqueness of God's attributes. Not only is He unique and peerless but so are His regents (the Master-souls), who sell the priceless wares of His Holy Word. Many have sung His praises and countless more, to come, might do the same, nevertheless the Almighty has remained, remains, and shall remain unsaid.

STANZA XXVI

Peerless[1] are His attributes and priceless the pearls therein.
Peerless are His dealers and priceless His wares and stores.
Pearless are the customers that come and priceless the goods they buy.
Peerless is His love and peerless those that lose themselves in It.
Peerless is His Law and peerless His Court,
Peerless His scales of justice and peerless their measure.
Peerless is His generosity, peerless His acceptance.
Peerless His mercy and pearless His commands.
How peerless! How priceless! Who can describe Him?
His devotees singing His praises have sunk in silence,
And so have the Vedas, the Puranas and the learned.
The Brahmas and the Indras, sing of Him,
And the Gopis[2] and the Govind[2] do likewise.

1. The word used throughout in this passage in the original is *Amul*. It is difficult to render it exactly by a single word in English. Literally it means *priceless*, but is frequently used to mean *incompatible* and *peerless*, etc. Accordingly, both priceless and peerless have been employed in this translation.

2. Gopis or milk-maids—the mythical admirers of Lord Krishna or Govind, who were said to be tireless in singing His praises.

The Siva[3], and the holy Siddhas[4] sing of Him,
The mortals and the immortals all, all, sing His praises.
Countless speak of Him, and
Countless are about to make an attempt, and
Countless more departed, while singing of Him,
Still He remains and shall remain indescribable.
Man can behold Him only as He reveals Himself unto him,
O Nanak! Know Him as the only True One.
And those that claim to understand Him.
They are surely the most foolish of men.

* * *

Nanak now sketches in highly lyrical language the picture of God watching from His abode His many creations, which bow before Him in reverence.

STANZA XXVII

How wonderful Thy gate: how wonderful Thy mansion,
From whence Thou watchest Thy great creation.
Countless the instruments and harmonies that play therein,
Countless the measures, countless the singers, that sing Thy praises.
The Elements—Wind, Water and Fire—sing of Thee,
And of Thee sing the king of Death and his recording angels.[1]
To Thee sing the gods and goddesses whose beauty is of Thy making.
To Thee sing Siva, Brahma and likewise Indra from his throne.
To Thee sing the Siddhas in their meditation, and the Sadhus in their contemplation.
To Thee sing the ascetics, the righteous, the contented; and the heroes no less.
To Thee sing the learned pandits and the rishis from age to age reciting from the holy Vedas.
To Thee sing the heart-enslaving nymphs in the heaven, the earth and the nether regions.

3. *Siva*: An important Hindu deity.
4. *Siddhas*: Disciplined souls, i.e. sages and seers.

To Thee sing thy jewels (Saints) and the sixty-eight places of pilgrimage.

To Thee sing the mighty warriors, the heroes of great prowess, and all living creatures.[2]

To Thee sing the earthly regions, the heavens and the universes created and supported by Thee.

Those that please Thee also sing Thy praises and are saturated with Thy love and devotion.

And there are countless more that sing of Thee, whom one cannot even remember,

All lie beyond the ken of Nanak.

He is and is alone the ever-existent Lord.

He is the Truth and true is His holy Naam.

He is, and shall exist forevermore.

He who created all creations shall never depart, though worlds be destroyed.

He who made Nature with its many colours and many forms, looks after His own handiwork, as it behooves His own Greatness.

He is the Supreme Master and does what He lists,

He is the King of Kings, the Almighty Lord,

And ours, O Nanak, is only to abide by His Will.

1. *Dharam Raj*: Keeper of the Law who dispenses justice to souls after they have left the body, according to their actions, whose record is maintained by *Chitr* and *Gupt*, the two recording angels.

2. *Khanis*: Nanak here refers to the four Khanis or categories of living creatures according to their mode of birth, to wit:

(i) *Andaj*: those born from eggs, like birds, snakes, fish, etc.

(ii) *Jeraj*: those born from the foetus, like men and animals.

(iii) *Utbhuj*: those that sprout from seeds, like trees, shrubs and vegetables.

(iv) *Setaj* : those that grow out of sweat, filth, etc., like lice and worms, etc.

Nanak, now turning from His contemplation of the Almighty, concentrates on the kind of life required to reach His door.

During his time, Hinduism had precipitated itself into mere casteism and ritualism. The rites remained but the spirit was lost. The world was considered the root of all evil, and becoming a yogin and following certain set practices was thought the only means to salvation.

Nanak points out the inadequacy of such an outlook and stresses that it is the inner discipline and not the outer codes that bring true spiritual progress. Instead of the wooden ear-rings and mendicant's wallet of the yogins, he recommends contentment, self-respect and endeavour; instead of their body-smearing ashes, cloak and staff, he recommends constant meditation, preparedness-for-death and the anchor of a living Master's teachings. Salvation is not the monopoly of the so-called yogins. It is made possible only by a certain spiritual condition and those who attain it, even if they are not yogins, may reach the Highest: and conversely those who are outwardly yogins but have failed to achieve this condition may never reach God's door. This spiritual condition, not only requires the rigorous inner discipline but enjoins a catholic outlook on life—an outlook where one looks on all as equals and sees His hand in everything.

STANZA XXVIII

Let contentment be your ear-rings,
And endeavour for the Divine and respect for the Higher Self
be your wallet,
And constant meditation on Him be your ashes.
Let preparedness-for-death be your cloak,
And let your body be like unto a chaste virgin.
Let your Master's teachings be your supporting staff.

The highest religion[1] is to rise to Universal Brotherhood,[2]
Aye, to consider all creatures your equals.
Conquer your mind, for victory over self is victory over the world.
Hail,[3] Hail, to Him alone,
The Primal, Pure, Eternal, Immortal, and Immutable in all ages.

* * *

Carrying on his substitution of the outer practices of the yogins by inner spiritual disciplines, Nanak recommends that we should make Divine knowledge our food (man does not live by bread alone), inculcate charity and mercy, and attune ourselves to the Music of the Divine Word.

Nanak also forestalls the dangers that lie on the spiritual journey. Not only is wealth a hindrance, but the power one gains through self-discipline and partial spiritual attainment may itself become an obstacle in the way of fuller realisation. One begins to practise these occult powers and, absorbed in them, one tends to forget the real goal. Nanak, therefore, warns us against this possibility. Once we have begun the journey God-wards, we must not rest, waver or wander on the Way.

1. *Aa-ee Panthi:* It is the highest sect of the yogins.

2. *Sagal Jamati:* Classless class or class with no distinction between student and student, with boys from all sects and of all denominations, associating together in love and goodwill, and sitting together at the feet of one Master.

3. *Aa-des:* It is a compound word consisting of *Aadi* (the primal) and *Eesh* (God). It is a form of salutation among the yogins.

STANZA XXIX

Let Divine Knowledge be your bread.[1]
Let Mercy be your steward.[1]
Let the Divine Music vibrating in all be your trumpet.[1]
He is the only Lord[2] and has strung creation according to His Will.
Wealth[3] and supernatural powers[4] estrange one from the Lord.
The world goes on the two principles of Union and Separation,[5]
And all receive their share, as He ordains.
Hail, Hail to Him alone,

1. The reference here is to the symbolic rituals of the yogins. When their food is ready, the steward sounds a trumpet to call all the yogins together to partake of the same. Nanak, while addressing them, calls all to come to their goal and taste Divinity, or the Bread of Life, by communion with the Holy Word ringing within all and calling the faithful to the spiritual banquet.

2. *Nath*: The yogins bow to Gorakh Nath, their Teacher. But Nanak advises them to own only one Nath or Master who is controlling the entire creation.

3. *Ridh*: It means wealth.

4. *Sidh*: The word used in the original is *Sidh*, i.e. to accomplish. It is generally used to suggest the mastery of Supernatural Powers. Nanak deprecates not only wealth but also the exercise of these powers as obstacles in the Path to the Highest.

5. *Sanjog and Vijog*: These are the terms used in the original text and stand for the twin principles of separation and union whereby the play of the Lord unfolds itself.

By decree of the Lord, Man being separated from Him, is born in the world of action. Here he is led away into human error of attaching himself to the sensuous phenomena of the world. So long as he remains cognisant of the Divinity diffused in the world, he moves and has his being in Him. But when his petty ego cuts him off from the Lord and he asserts his independence and assumes the role of an active agent, he unwittingly gets trapped into transmigration or the cycle of births and deaths. In physical life he suffers pain and misery until he regenerates himself by his innate desire for peace, and works therefor. This leads him to seek reunion with the Creator, the fountain-head of Everlasting Joy and Peace.

But for this principle in Man for resurrection or reunion, there would be no spiritual awakening and no spiritual progress and the mighty play of the world would come to naught. Thus the twin-principles of *Vijog* (separation from the Lord) and *Sanjog* (the inherent desire for re-union with Him), control the motions of the world.

"Our hearts find no rest, until we rest in Thee."— *St. Augustine*

The Primal, Pure, Eternal, Immortal, and Immutable in all ages.

* * *

Nanak now turns his attention from the means of salvation, to the working of God's creation. The universe moves on the triple principles concerned respectively with creating, sustaining and destroying. All these principles work according to His Will and are only His agents. But though God watches over these agents, they paradoxically cannot know Him who is the Subjective and the Formless, since they are part of the objective creation.

STANZA XXX

The Great Mother,[1] conceiving, brought forth three regents;
The first creating, the second sustaining, and the last destroying.
What He desires, they perform,
They work under His Will.
But great the wonder, though He watches over them, they behold Him not.
Hail, Hail to Him alone,
The Primal, Pure, Eternal, Immortal, and Immutable in all ages.

* * *

And now Nanak, once again, returns to the Almighty Creator. He has His exalted abode in the different planes of all creation. Whatever arrangements He has made are made final and ultimate. He has made permanent laws in all spheres which set creation agoing. He is the Unchangeable Permanence.

1. *Maee:* This word in the original, can mean both Mother and *Maya* (illusionary matter). Nanak, referring to the two meanings, regards *Maya* as a mother who has borne three sons, who symbolise the three principles that sustain her dominion. They are the three deities representing the Trinity: *Brahma, Vishnu* and *Siva*, the creator, the sustainer and the destroyer respectively; but all working only under His Will, with no say of their own. Hence, Nanak enjoins the worship of the Highest only and not gods and goddesses of a lower order.

STANZA XXXI

He resides in all the planes of creation.
And has in them His munificent stores, which were supplied only once and need no replenishing,
Whatever we receive, we receive by His decree.
It is He who has created His creation,
And He who watcheth over it
O Nanak! the works of the True One are genuine.[1]
Hail, Hail, to Him alone,
The Primal, Pure, Eternal, Immortal and Immutable in all ages.

* * *

But, communion with Naam is hindered by the earthly desires that pull at our hearts; and lead us away from the subjective Truth to the outside world. How then is one to overcome these desires? Nanak enjoins that the way lies through "Simran" or constant remembrance of the Lord. Other saints and sages have said the same thing. The subject of Simran has been dealt with in more detail in the introduction.

There are two powers working in man: the "Pranas" or motor currents and the spiritual or sensory currents. Many yogins, endeavouring to reach the Highest, have sought to withdraw both these currents. But, the Masters (Guru Nanak among them) have taught that it is unnecessary to control the "Pranas." One may withdraw the sensory currents without touching the "Pranas," through "Simran" and through focusing one's attention behind the eyes, at the seat of the soul. Once one has withdrawn the entire sensory currents (the body

1. With most of us, it is a matter of common belief that the world is a mere chimera, a dream with no reality about it. This belief is evidently based on the transitory nature of all worldly phenomena. Everything appears like a meteor that flashes for a while and disappears. Hence, it is argued that man's sojourn here is no more than a dream. But, says Nanak, as the Lord is True, His words must also be true, and His creation is not mere illusion but His holy abode.

Nanak elsewhere has beautifully said:

"This world is the abode of the True One, and the True One dwells in it."

continues to function normally as regards respiration, digestion and circulation, etc.) to this point, the soul may travel further on the spiritual path. This is an easy and natural way.

The Master says:

"O Nanak, learn to withdraw the Life-current whilst alive,
Learn ye to practise such a yoga."

Again,—

"Learn to die so that you may begin to live."—Holy Bible

It is this technique of withdrawal that Nanak is referring to in this stanza, though he does not analyse it in detail, as he has done this elsewhere in his teachings. He also reiterates that to achieve salvation through Naam, needs not only effort but also His Grace and Will.

STANZA XXXII

Let one tongue grow into a hundred thousand, nay even twenty times more,
And each of them endlessly chant His holy name.
In this way lie the steps that lead Godwards,[1] by ascending which one becomes one with Him.
On hearing of the Heavens, even worms aspire to reach them,
Not knowing that salvation comes only through His Grace,[2]
And those who say otherwise, are vain babblers and liars.

* * *

Carrying the idea of the necessity of His Grace and Will for man's salvation, Nanak observes that in other matters as well—in fact in everything—His Will is all in all.

STANZA XXXIII

You have no power to speak or to be silent,
No power to ask or to give.
You have no power over life or death,

1. *Ekis:* The term used in the original text is *Ekis* or *Ek-Ish: Ek* means one and *Ish* means God, i.e. at-one-ment with God or union with One God.

2. Again, Nanak, is emphasising that for salvation, we need not only effort but also His Grace and His Will.

No power over wealth or state for which you are ever restless.
You have no power over spiritual awakening,
No power to know the Truth, or to achieve your own salvation.
Let him who thinks he has the power, try.
O Nanak! none is high or low, but by His Will.

* * *

From here begins the final part of Jap Ji. In it, Nanak gives a rapid survey af the various spiritual realms that the soul has to traverse in its Homeward journey. They are five in number:

(1) Dharm Khand or the Realm of Action.
(2) Gian Khand or the Realm of Knowledge.
(3) Sarm Khand or the Realm of Ecstasy.
(4) Karm Khand or the Realm of Grace.
(5) Sach Khand or the Realm of Truth.

The first is the Realm of Dharm, which the soul must fully realise before it can rise to the next higher spiritual plane above it. This is the stage where the embodied souls must work fully cognisant that it is He who made the world phenomena with all the immutable laws which bind one and all. The law of cause and effect nobody can escape. What a man sows, he must reap. There is none outside His domain. Men's actions go with them after their death and are weighed in the scales of God's Justice. Those found wanting are sent for judgment according to their actions. The only thing acceptable at His Court is "communion with and practice of the Divine Word." Those who adhere to it, are honoured.

STANZA XXXIV

Creating the day and the night, the months and the seasons,
The fire, the wind, the water and the nether regions,
Amidst all these, He set up the earth as Dharm Khand or the arena of action.
And He peopled it with creatures of many colours and many forms,

Creatures of whom there is no count.
All are judged according to their deeds,
For true is the Lord and immaculate His Law.
Those acceptable to Him are honoured in His Court,
And it is only through His Grace that one may gain that distinction.
The imperfect are perfected there,[1]
O Nanak! It is there that this mystery is revealed.

* * *

Nanak, in this stanza describes the immense expansion of the soul's horizon when it enters "Gian Khand" or the Realm of Knowledge. Here the devotee sees the manifold nature with all created things. Here he begins to hear the rapturous strains of Melodious Song resounding through the whole creation. Here he feels excessive joy at the conception of Nature with her immutable laws, her infinity of forms and phenomena, multifarious creations and manifold blessings, that he finds.

STANZA XXXV

Thus much of the Realm of Dharma;
And now Gian Khand, the Realm of Knowledge;
Countless its elements, air, water and fire,
And countless Krishnas and Sivas,
And countless the Brahmas fashioning various creations of countless forms and countless hues.

1. The last two lines—

"Kach pakai uthe pa-aye,
Nanak gia japey ja-aye"

have been invariably interpreted by various translators, as stating that the true and the false are known there and can no longer deceive. But this does not appear to stand as it apparently ignores the fact that the lines follow on the reference to those honoured by God and the metaphor of "*raw and ripe*" suggests immaturity and maturity, rather than falsehood and truth.

Countless the Fields of Action,[1] countless the golden mountains,[2]
And countless the Dhrus[3] meditating therein.
Countless the Indras, countless the suns and moons, and countless the earthly and stellar regions;
Countless the Siddhas, the Buddhas, the Naths, and countless the gods and goddesses.
Countless the Danus[4] and the Sages, and countless the bejewelled oceans.
Countless the sources of creation, countless the harmonies, countless those that listen unto them,
And countless the devotees of the Word,
Endless and unending, O Nanak! this Realm.

* * *

From the description of Gian Khand or the Realm of Knowledge, Nanak proceeds to describe, "Sarm Khand," or the Realm of Ecstasy. Here everything is enchantingly beautiful and marvelously strange, and words are of no consequence. It is here that the soul becomes etherealised by the power of the Word and one gets an insight into the real nature of things.

STANZA XXXVI

Divine Knowledge illumines all in the Realm of Knowledge,
While Divine symphonies play unending music, and Joy and Bliss reign supreme,
Next, the Realm of Ecstasy, where the Word is enrapturing.

1. *Karm Bhumi:* A place where one is endowed with a free will, and reaps the fruits of his own actions. This world is termed as *Karm Bhumi* for here reigns the principle of action and reaction or cause and effect.
2. *Sumer:* The golden mountain seen in this spiritual plane by the devotees.
3. *Dhru:* A saint proverbial for his steadfast meditation.
4. *Danu:* Demigods.

Everything created here is marvelously strange, and beyond description,
Whoever tries to describe the same, must repent his folly.
Herein the mind, reason and understanding are etherealised, the self comes to its own, and develops the penetration of the gods and the sages.

* * *

In the Realm of Grace, man rises above the evanescent charms of the phenomenal world. He sees all nature standing submissively to serve at God's Feet. His Word purifies the soul of its sins and awakens the latent energies in it. Matter no longer blinds the inner vision. For him, the Lord pervades everywhere and he is now fully conscious of Him. Here one comes face to face with the Word in Its pure substance. And he now knows himself, and his true origin, for he sees himself as of the same substance as God.

Finally, the pilgrim soul reaches Sach Khand or the Abode of Truth. Here complete Oneness is realised and it sees all universes functioning according to His Will in devout awe and adoration. Even remembrance of such a vision is blissful, but the vision itself is such that no eye has ever seen, the heart cannot conceive and the tongue cannot describe.

STANZA XXXVII

Higher still stands Karm Khand, the Realm of Grace,
Here the Word is all in all, and nothing else prevails.
Here dwell the bravest of the brave, the conquerors of the mind, filled with the love Divine,
Here dwell devotees with devotion, incomparable as Sita's.[1]
Illumined with beauty ineffable,
All hearts filled with God, they live beyond the reach of death and of delusion.[2]

1. *Sita*: The wife of Rama known for her great devotion.
2. The word delusion here refers to the delusion of maya or matter.

Here dwell the Bhagats or Sages drawn from all regions,
Who rejoice in the True One and live in perpetual bliss.
Sach Khand or the Realm of Truth is the seat of the Formless One.
Here He creates all creations, rejoicing in creating.
Here are many regions, heavenly systems and universes,
To count which were to count the countless,
Here, out of the Formless,
The heavenly plateaux and all else come into form,
All destined to move according to His Will.
He who is blessed with this vision, rejoices in its contemplation.
But, O Nanak, such is its beauty that to try to describe it is to attempt the impossible.[3]

* * *

Now Nanak, before concluding, lists the qualifications required of a devotee before he can succeed on the spiritual path. He sums up these qualifications as six in number. The first of these is chastity of thought, speech and deed. This is the first prerequisite for the dawn of Higher Life, and is the foundation on which the superstructure of spirituality is raised. Christ has also said: "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God." Purity is, verily, the key that unlocks the door of meditation leading to the Mansion of the Lord. Secondly, one must develop patience, which enables one to bear cheerfully whatever may befall. Thirdly, one must have control over one's thoughts and cast away all desires to insure equilibrium of mind. Fourthly, steady, daily practice of, and holding communion with, the Word with full faith in one's Master. Fifthly, one should live in the devout awe of His Presence, stimulating one to untiring effort to achieve ultimate union with Him. And over all one must love Him with an intensity that burns up all impurities and blazes the way to His door.

3. *Karara Sar:* Literally it means, hard as iron; metaphorically, impossible.

STANZA XXXVIII

Make chastity[1] your furnace, patience your smithy,
The Master's word your anvil, and true knowledge your hammer.
Make awe of God your bellows and with it kindle the fire of austerity,
And in the crucible of love, melt the nectar Divine,
Only in such a mint, can man be cast into the Word.
But they alone who are favoured by Him, can take unto this Path,
O Nanak, on whom He looks with Grace, He fills with Everlasting Peace.

* * *

In this Finale, Nanak, by way of an epilogue, gives a complete view of life, its nature, its purpose, and its salvation. We are all like children, whom the mother earth nourishes. Each one sows the seeds of his actions and reaps the fruit thereof. God's justice is immaculate. They that act well move nearer towards Him; they that do not act well move farther away from Him. They alone who practise the holy Word will be saved—not only they, but countless more—their companions and disciples, through their good actions.

FINALE

Air is the Master, Water the father, and the Earth the mother,
Day and Night are the two nurses in whose lap the whole world is at play.
Our actions: good and evil, will be brought before His court,
And by our own deeds, shall we move higher or be cast into the depths.

1. Chastity here refers not only to physical purity, but even more to the spiritual one, of spotless thoughts, words and deeds.

Those who have communed with the Word, their toils shall end.
And their faces shall flame with glory,
Not only shall they have salvation,
O Nanak, but many more shall find freedom with them.

* * *

Here, all the living beings are likened to children. The water (i.e. sperm) is the father, giving them life. The earth, like a mother, affords them nourishment. Day supplies them with work and is, therefore, the male nurse—while the night lulls them to rest, as a female nurse. The breath of the True Master imparts the Divine Word, without which a man's soul is dead.